

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4626, as amended, the VA AIM Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4626, as amended, the VA Assessment by Independent Measures Act, or AIM Act.

The AIM Act is sponsored by my friend and fellow Marine Corps veteran, General JACK BERGMAN. General BERGMAN is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, and I thank him for his dedication to ensuring that the VA is providing good care for each one of our Nation's veterans.

The AIM Act would require an independent assessment of the VA healthcare system once every decade, starting in the year 2025.

When the VA was in the midst of a nationwide access and accountability crisis in 2014, Congress passed the Choice Act to help right the ship. The Choice Act included a provision requiring an independent assessment of the VA healthcare system. That led to many of the reforms that are occurring across the VA system today. Establishing a mechanism for regular independent assessments will ensure that the VA continues to improve in the decades ahead.

I appreciate Chairman TAKANO and his staff for working with me and General BERGMAN while the AIM Act was pending in committee. I hope that this bill will have the same level of bipartisan support today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 4626, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Assessment by Independent Measures Act, or AIM Act.

When it comes to bureaucracies, I have never believed that maintaining the status quo is an acceptable path forward. In fact, it is an impossible path forward.

The world is constantly in a state of change. The way American men and women defend freedom around the world, and the way those same men and women seek care when they come home, is constantly changing as well. The VA healthcare system must change, too, or it will never fulfill its obligations to all of our veterans.

That is where the AIM Act comes in. The AIM Act would require an independent assessment of the operations and management of the VA healthcare system once every decade, beginning in 2025.

The independent assessment framework in the AIM Act is modeled after

the independent assessment that was required in the Choice Act, which was signed into law in 2014 following the nationwide VA access and accountability crisis that saw some veterans literally dying on VA facilities' waiting lists.

That independent assessment was completed in 2015, and the findings and recommendations it contained directly underpinned many of the necessary improvements that have occurred in the VA healthcare system since then.

The AIM Act would ensure that this successful model is not a one-and-done but instead regularly recurs to ensure that the VA keeps improving for veterans long into the future.

I am grateful for the support the AIM Act has received from veterans service organizations, particularly the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Wounded Warrior Project, and the Minority Veterans of America.

I am also grateful for the bipartisan support the AIM Act received in the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I thank all of my colleagues for that. I hope that there will be a similar show of bipartisan support for the bill today. My fellow veterans have earned it.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing this important piece of legislation, H.R. 4626, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4626, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

## PROTECTIONS FOR STUDENT VETERANS ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5603) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish protections for a member of the Armed Forces who leaves a course of education, paid for with certain educational assistance, to perform certain service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5603

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protections for Student Veterans Act".

## SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROTECTIONS FOR A MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO LEAVES A COURSE OF EDUCATION, PAID FOR WITH CERTAIN EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, TO PERFORM CERTAIN SERVICE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, amended by inserting after section 3691 the following new section:

### "§ 3691A. Withdrawal or leave of absence from certain education

"(a) IN GENERAL.—

"(1) WITHDRAWAL OR LEAVE OF ABSENCE.—A covered member may, after receiving orders to enter a period of covered service, withdraw or take a leave of absence from covered education.

"(2) PROHIBITION ON ADVERSE ACTION.—The institution concerned may not take any adverse action against a covered member on the basis that such covered member withdraws or takes a leave of absence under paragraph (1). Adverse actions include the following:

"(A) The assignment of a failing grade to a covered member for covered education.

"(B) The reduction of the grade point average of a covered member for covered education.

"(C) The characterization of any absence of a covered member from covered education as unexcused.

"(D) The assessment of any financial penalty against a covered member.

"(b) WITHDRAWAL.—If a covered member withdraws from covered education under subsection (a), the institution concerned shall refund all tuition and fees (including payments for housing) for the academic term from which the covered servicemember withdraws.

"(c) LEAVE OF ABSENCE.—If a covered member takes a leave of absence from covered education under subsection (a), the institution concerned shall—

"(1) assign a grade of 'incomplete' (or equivalent) to the covered member for covered education for the academic term from which the covered member takes such leave of absence; and

"(2) to the extent practicable, permit the covered member, upon completion of the period covered service, to complete such academic term.

"(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'covered education' means a course of education—

"(A) at an institution of higher education; and

"(B) paid for with educational assistance furnished under a law administered by the Secretary.

"(2) The term 'covered member' means a member of the Armed Forces (including the reserve components) enrolled in covered education.

"(3) The term 'covered service' means—

"(A) active service or inactive-duty training, as such terms are defined in section 101 of title 10; or

"(B) State active duty, as defined in section 4303 of this title.

"(4) The term 'institution concerned' means, with respect to a covered member, the institution of higher education where the covered member is enrolled in covered education.

"(5) The term 'institution of higher education' has the meaning given such term in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

"(6) The term 'period of covered service' means the period beginning on the date on which a covered member enters covered service and ending on the date on which the covered member is released from covered service or dies while in covered service."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents at the beginning of such chapter is

amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3691 the following new item:

“3691A. Withdrawal or leave of absence from certain education.”.

**SEC. 3. IMPROVEMENTS TO ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR CERTAIN FLIGHT TRAINING AND OTHER PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION.**

(a) **USE OF ENTITLEMENT FOR PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENSES.**—Section 3034(d) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1) by striking the semicolon and inserting the following: “and is required for the course of education being pursued (including with respect to a dual major, concentration, or other element a degree); and”;

(2) by striking paragraph (2); and

(3) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (2).

(b) **ACCELERATED PAYMENTS FOR FLIGHT TRAINING.**—Section 3313 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(m) **ACCELERATED PAYMENTS FOR CERTAIN FLIGHT TRAINING.**—

“(1) **PAYMENTS.**—An individual enrolled in a program of education pursued at an institution of higher learning in which flight training is required to earn the degree being pursued (including with respect to a dual major, concentration, or other element of such a degree) may elect to receive accelerated payments of amounts for tuition and fees determined under subsection (c). The amount of each accelerated payment shall be an amount equal to twice the amount for tuition and fee so determined under such subsection, but the total amount of such payments may not exceed the total amount of tuition and fees for the program of education. The amount of monthly stipends shall be determined in accordance with such subsection (c) and may not be accelerated under this paragraph.

“(2) **EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING.**—An individual may make an election under paragraph (1) only if the individual receives educational counseling under section 3697A(a) of this title.

“(3) **CHARGE AGAINST ENTITLEMENT.**—The number of months of entitlement charged an individual for accelerated payments made pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be determined at the rate of two months for each month in which such an accelerated payment is made.”.

(c) **FLIGHT TRAINING AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.**—Subsection (c)(1)(A) of such section 3313 is amended—

(1) in clause (i)—

(A) by redesignating subclauses (I) and (II) as items (aa) and (bb), respectively;

(B) by striking “In the case of a program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning” and inserting “(I) Subject to subclause (II), in the case of a program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning not described in clause (ii)(II)(bb)”;

(C) by adding at the end the following new subclause:

“(II) In determining the actual net cost for in-State tuition and fees pursuant to subclause (I), the Secretary may not pay for tuition and fees relating to flight training.”; and

(2) in clause (ii)—

(A) in subclause (I), by redesignating items (aa) and (bb) as subitems (AA) and (BB), respectively;

(B) in subclause (II), by redesignating items (aa) and (bb) as subitems (AA) and (BB), respectively;

(C) by redesignating subclauses (I) and (II) as items (aa) and (bb), respectively;

(D) by striking “In the case of a program of education pursued at a non-public or for-

eign institution of higher learning” and inserting “(I) In the case of a program of education described in subclause (II)”;

(E) by adding at the end the following new subclause:

“(II) A program of education described in this subclause is any of the following:

“(aa) A program of education pursued at a non-public or foreign institution of higher learning.

“(bb) A program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning in which flight training is required to earn the degree being pursued (including with respect to a dual major, concentration, or other element of such a degree).”.

(d) **CERTAIN PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION CARRIED OUT UNDER CONTRACT.**—Section 3313(c)(1)(A)(ii)(II) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (c)(2)(E), is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“(cc) A program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning in which the public institution of higher learning enters into a contract or agreement with an entity (other than another public institution of higher learning) to provide such program of education or a portion of such program of education.”.

(e) **APPLICATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided by paragraph (2), the amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) **SPECIAL RULE FOR CURRENT STUDENTS.**—In the case of an individual who, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, is using educational assistance under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, to pursue a course of education that includes a program of education described in item (bb) or (cc) of section 3313(c)(1)(A)(ii)(II) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsections (c) and (d), respectively, the amendment made by such subsection shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. **TAKANO**) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. **BOST**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

**GENERAL LEAVE**

Mr. **TAKANO**. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 5603, as amended.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. **TAKANO**. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5603, as amended, the Protec-

tions for Student Veterans Act, introduced by Representative **UNDERWOOD**.

This bill amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, which provides broad protections for Active Duty, reservist, and National Guard servicemembers during deployments.

H.R. 5603, as amended, enhances protections for members of the Armed Forces who must suspend their education to fulfill military orders.

Many States, including Illinois and Washington, have stronger student protections for servicemembers than those that exist at the Federal level. There are currently few Federal protections for members of the armed services who are enrolled in higher education when they receive Active Duty orders. These servicemembers can be held liable to repay tuition and may also receive failing or incomplete grades as a result of suspending their education for military duty.

I hope we can all agree that this is an unfair penalty to those members of the Armed Forces who are preparing for their future through education while also serving our country.

The protections proposed in this bill would cover unexpected withdrawals due to military orders and can provide restoration of benefits and reimbursements for classes.

This bill takes the best practices from around the country to make sure student veterans aren't left with debts or incomplete classes outside their control due to military orders.

This legislation is supported by numerous VSOs, including Student Veterans of America.

I thank Speaker **PELOSI** and Leader **HOYER** for bringing this legislation to the floor, and I urge the rest of my colleagues to support this legislation to protect GI Bill benefits for servicemembers fulfilling their duty to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. **BOST**. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5603, as amended, the Protections for Student Veterans Act.

This bill would protect student veterans who have to withdraw from a course of education under the GI Bill if they are called up for Active Duty or for training. This change would protect students from receiving a poor grade or an incomplete while they are doing their job to protect this country.

The change proposed in this bill is needed, and it has my full support.

I am also pleased that this bill, as amended, includes the text of Congressman **CAWTHORN**'s bill, H.R. 4874, the Fly Vets Act. His bill would close a long-standing loophole that allows public flight training schools to charge an unlimited amount in tuition and fees for GI Bill students.

This bill would allow students to utilize a revolutionary accelerated tuition and fee model that would provide twice the amount of tuition and fees per

month for 2 months of eligibility. This is commonsense legislation that would protect both the student veteran and the taxpayer.

I thank Congressman CAWTHORN for his hard work on this bill. I also thank Congressmen WENSTRUP and LEVIN for their work on this bill in previous Congresses. I hope that this year we can get this needed change across the finish line.

While we are talking about the GI Bill, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss another matter. At least at the start of the pandemic, we worked on a bipartisan effort to ensure that student veterans' GI Bill housing allowance payments are not cut when their in-person classes converted to online learning due to COVID-19. The current authorization expires on December 21, 2021.

Chairman TAKANO and Congressman TRONE are advocating for a bill that extends this protection, but it is not paid for. Instead, it relies on emergency spending to cover the more than \$200 million mandatory score associated with the bill. I believe that is too high of a cost to consider through emergency spending and must insist that we offset the extension.

To that end, I introduced a bill that would achieve the policy objective but pay for the cost of the bill with a regularly used offset.

My bill also includes changes that are needed to ensure that GI Bill students can attend foreign schools. It would also give U.S. schools time to comply with the new reporting requirements passed last Congress.

A coalition of 18 higher education groups has advocated for these changes for several months and support my proposal. They understand that if these changes are not made soon, many schools will be forced to stop accepting students who are using the GI Bill.

I understand the chairman has recently received a letter from the chancellor of the University of California at Riverside, who agrees that this proposal must be offset.

Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox wrote that by passing the bill without an offset, we would be "no closer to a resolution on this critical issue."

The letter goes on to say that passing a bill out of the House without an offset "will jeopardize UCR's ability to continue to serve our veteran students."

The chancellor also stated that this fall UC Riverside supported hundreds of military-connected students, including about 179 veterans who could be impacted by inaction.

Unless I am mistaken, UC Riverside is in Chairman TAKANO's district.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the letter from Chancellor Wilcox.

UC RIVERSIDE,  
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR,  
Riverside, CA, November 12, 2021.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,  
U.S. Representative,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE TAKANO: I understand that you are planning to bring H.R.

5545, the Responsible Education Mitigating Options and Technical Extensions (RE-MOTE) Act, up for a vote in the House next week. The bill includes critical technical corrections to address unintended consequences stemming from several provisions in the Isakson Roe Act and the Training in High-Demand Roles to Improve Veteran Employment (THRIVE) Act that went into effect on August 1, 2021. The bill would also extend certain COVID-related flexibilities granted to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the wake of the pandemic.

As the bill is currently written, however, it does not include an offset for the approximately \$200 million cost for the extension of COVID-19 flexibilities. I am deeply concerned that without the inclusion of an offset, the bill will not be able to pass the Senate by unanimous consent and we will be no closer to a resolution on this critical issue.

During the Fall of 2021, UC Riverside served 179 Veterans, 37 Reservists, 11 National Guard, and 15 Active Duty self-identified members of the U.S. military branches. Designated as a "Military Spouse Friendly" campus, UCR served over 350 dependents, and have utilized over \$6M in Veterans benefits.

Without an offset for the extension of COVID-19 flexibilities, it will jeopardize UCR's ability to continue to serve our Veteran Students, due to the compliance issues that require fixes. I would also urge you to include language to modify VA's current "rounding out" rule to ensure that more veterans can maintain full-time benefits during the last term of their program.

I respectfully request that your staff work to pass bipartisan legislation next week that addresses these concerns and can be quickly passed through both chambers and signed into law.

Sincerely,

KIM A. WILCOX,  
Chancellor.

□ 1300

Mr. BOST. At our full committee markup 2 weeks ago, I urged Chairman TAKANO to work with me and our Senate colleagues to find a way forward on the offset issue on a bipartisan basis.

However, last week I was told that Congressman TRONE's bill would be on the slate of bills, but the cost would not be offset. I registered my concern and was glad to see that the un-offset bill will not be considered under suspension of the rules today.

I do understand, however, that the majority intends to take Congressman TRONE's bill to the Rules Committee the week after next and pass it out of the House un-offset through a rule.

Let me be clear, I support the policy, but I believe the cost of the bill must be offset. Schools like UC Riverside clearly agree with me. Even if the Democrats are able to get Congressman TRONE's un-offset bill through the House—and that is a big "if"—I don't believe that they can pass it in the Senate by unanimous consent.

It is the responsibility of the leaders of our committee to solve this issue so that the bill can quickly make it to the President's desk. Although the chairman may not like it, my approach is the only way to get this done in time to help students in a fiscally responsible manner.

The higher education community has told us that this extension needs to be

enacted by Thanksgiving. I think we can see that under the majority's current plan, the deadline will be missed. After Thanksgiving we have only 9 legislative days left before these protections expire. We are simply running out of time.

I do not have a preference for whether we take up my bill or amend Congressman TRONE's bill to include the offset, but I urge the chairman to come back to reality and stop playing political games with it so that we can ensure that student veterans are protected in a fiscally sound manner.

At the very least, I would advise the chairman not to let this inaction impact thousands of student veterans across the country, including the 179 right there in his own district.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am distressed that the ranking member has chosen this particular moment to inject comments about the REMOTE Act, sponsored by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE), and to imply that there is obstruction in taking action to help our veterans, our student veterans, with their housing allowances—which we took action on during the pandemic, which still we are not completely out of yet. I would argue that we are still in a national emergency. We are seeing COVID infections rise in Europe, and we are seeing vaccine resistance and hesitancy in many parts of the country, which still necessitate the need for a policy which allows for student veterans to still get their housing allowances while they are taking classes virtually.

I will remind the minority that three times under the Trump administration, we passed something like the REMOTE Act, the authority to allow student veterans to receive their housing allowances while taking virtual classes. They were not in residence at the school where they would do in-person learning. We allowed this three times under emergency spending. Why? Because emergency spending fits the moment. And it still fits the moment. This nonsense about we have to pay for something that should be an emergency is nonsense.

I recall times on this floor when we had Members arguing that we should not pay for the damage done for hurricanes in one State because it didn't happen to the rest of the States, that we need to find a pay-for for hurricane damage in this country and for certain other kinds of natural disasters.

A pandemic is a type of natural disaster. In this case, it has killed 700,000 Americans. I would argue that we saved lives, and we relieved a lot of suffering of our veterans who would have been turned out in the streets if we did not give them this housing allowance.

And now at the eleventh hour when we intended to bring Representative TRONE's bill to the floor, suddenly we had to meet a pay-for demand of the

minority, and to set a precedent for future disasters that we would have to have this very argument.

Instead of the precedent being that we spend emergency funds for emergency situations, we now are in a situation where the minority is arguing a ridiculous ideological argument about how we pay for things during a time of a national emergency.

I am disappointed that the minority has brought up its objections and also sought to use my University of California, Riverside as part of this pawn. I just received a message from my chancellor correcting the position that they took on their public letter. They are the only university to submit such a detailed letter regarding the pay-for. No other university has sought to take that position. I have questions as to how my university reached a point where they issued such a letter so that it could be used on the floor. I now have a correction that was issued to me just hours before.

This is about America's veterans, and this is about serving America's veterans during an emergency situation in which 700,000 Americans have already died. I want to keep those veterans safe. I want to keep them in housing. And, yes, I believe it is appropriate to keep the precedent of using emergency funding and not have this silly political gamesmanship over the pay-for.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, paying for something and doing the job that we are supposed to be doing here is not political gamesmanship.

I said in my statement that I believe that we must continue to provide for these veterans, but it is our fiduciary duty to do it in the correct way. That is what I am asking for. I am also asking for it because that way we know it will move through the Senate and work in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to try to move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I will just reply that it is political gamesmanship. I hate seeing universities used as pawns in this game. I hate seeing our student veterans being used as pawns.

What is at stake here is the principle, the precedent that this Congress will pay for emergencies out of emergency funding. The need to help our veterans, who must take their classes remotely, pay for their housing because of the national emergency that we are still in, is part of a precedent that we need to preserve.

This is not a political game to me. This is about protecting our veterans. This is about protecting our Nation in the future.

The idea that when a national disaster, whether it occurs in the form of a hurricane, an earthquake, or some other calamity like a pandemic that has killed 700,000 Americans, that the

principle stands that that is an emergency and that we as a Nation stand together as one American from whatever State we are in to help an American in another State, even though that disaster didn't happen in that State. But this disaster was omnipresent throughout our country. I don't understand the logic.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support the underlying bill that was discussed. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing this very important legislation, H.R. 5603, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5603, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### PROTECTING MOMS WHO SERVED ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 796) to codify maternity care coordination programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 796

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021".

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **MATERNAL MORTALITY.**—The term "maternal mortality" means a death occurring during pregnancy or within a one-year period after pregnancy that is caused by pregnancy-related or childbirth complications, including suicide, overdose, or other death resulting from a mental health or substance use disorder attributed to or aggravated by pregnancy-related or childbirth complications.

(2) **POSTPARTUM.**—The term "postpartum", with respect to an individual, means the one-year period beginning on the last day of the pregnancy of the individual.

(3) **PREGNANCY-ASSOCIATED DEATH.**—The term "pregnancy-associated death" means the death of a pregnant or postpartum individual, by any cause, that occurs during pregnancy or within one year following pregnancy, regardless of the outcome, duration, or site of the pregnancy.

(4) **PREGNANCY-RELATED DEATH.**—The term "pregnancy-related death" means the death of a pregnant or postpartum individual that occurs during pregnancy or within one year following pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.

(5) **RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP.**—The term "racial and ethnic minority group" has the meaning given that term in section 1707(g)(1) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300u-6(g)(1)).

(6) **SEVERE MATERNAL MORBIDITY.**—The term "severe maternal morbidity" means a health condition, including a mental health condition or substance use disorder, attributed to or aggravated by pregnancy or childbirth that results in significant short-term or long-term consequences to the health of the individual who was pregnant.

#### SEC. 3. SUPPORT BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF MATERNITY CARE COORDINATION.

(a) **PROGRAM ON MATERNITY CARE COORDINATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out the maternity care coordination program described in Veterans Health Administration Directive 1330.03.

(2) **TRAINING AND SUPPORT.**—In carrying out the program under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide to community maternity care providers training and support with respect to the unique needs of pregnant and postpartum veterans, particularly regarding mental and behavioral health conditions relating to the service of those veterans in the Armed Forces.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2022 for the program under subsection (a)(1).

(2) **SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.**—Amounts authorized under paragraph (1) are authorized in addition to any other amounts authorized for maternity health care and coordination for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **COMMUNITY MATERNITY CARE PROVIDERS.**—The term "community maternity care providers" means maternity care providers located at non-Department facilities who provide maternity care to veterans under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, or any other law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(2) **NON-DEPARTMENT FACILITIES.**—The term "non-Department facilities" has the meaning given that term in section 1701 of title 38, United States Code.

#### SEC. 4. REPORT ON MATERNAL MORTALITY AND SEVERE MATERNAL MORBIDITY AMONG PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM VETERANS.

(a) **GAO REPORT.**—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, and make publicly available, a report on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among pregnant and postpartum veterans, with a particular focus on racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes for veterans.

(b) **MATTERS INCLUDED.**—The report under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) To the extent practicable—

(A) the number of pregnant and postpartum veterans who have experienced a pregnancy-related death or pregnancy-associated death in the most recent 10 years of available data;

(B) the rate of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births for pregnant and postpartum veterans;

(C) the number of cases of severe maternal morbidity among pregnant and postpartum veterans in the most recent year of available data;

(D) an assessment of the racial and ethnic disparities in maternal mortality and severe